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ABSTRACT

This bulletin highlights strategies to enhance professional development for employers and enable employers to develop structured work-based learning opportunities for employees. The first section highlights these strategies: ensuring top-level support; providing assistance in developing structured work-based learning opportunities; training worksite supervisors and mentors; creating peer learning and information networks; building school-to-work into an employer's professional development program; and facilitating employer involvement in school-based activities. The second section describes one effective practice: the BellSouth Corporation's Worksite Mentor Communication Skills Workshop that provides mentors with communication techniques to train and coach students successfully. The bulletin then lists seven organizations that can provide further information on the topic. Brief summaries describe the organizations' focus and activities. Seven resource publications are also listed. (YLB)

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★RESOURCE BULLETIN

SEPTEMBER 1996

Professional Development for Employers in School-To-Work Systems

Global competitive pressures are driving American businesses to develop more productive workplace structures in order to survive. Many of these innovative workplace structures place a greater emphasis on the ability of all employees to plan, adapt to new situations, work in teams, and solve problems in the midst of constant change. School-to-work initiatives can encourage these behaviors, transforming workplaces into learning environments for both youth and adults, and helping businesses build a competitive advantage in the global economy. The importance of human capital in increasingly productive workplaces, in addition to an opportunity to become a key participant in education and community development, has placed school-to-work on the agenda of corporate and business management strategies.

However, many employers may not currently have the capacity to develop structured work-based learning opportunities. Simply bringing students into the workplace does not guarantee a structured learning experience that benefits both the student and the employer. Introducing employers to school-to-work, and assisting in the implementation of an initiative that fits their competitive and philanthropic goals, often requires the support of professional development activities.

Based on factors such as the intensity of employer commitment, the nature of employer involvement, the number of participating schools and students, and time and scheduling issues, professional development for employers in school-to-work systems can take several forms. This bulletin highlights strategies to enhance professional development for employers, offers examples of effective practices, and provides a listing of resources in this area.

Strategies

Ensuring top-level support. Leadership from top-level business executives is essential in building school-to-work systems. CEOs and other executives can serve as "champions" for school-to-work, promoting involvement within their own organization and throughout the community.

The National Employer Leadership Council (NELC) was formed in 1994 to enlist the support of business executives and build their understanding of school-to-work. The NELC is a coalition of business leaders from corporations around the nation, serving as an information source and collective voice for business in the ongoing national dialogue around school-to-work issues. The NELC is in the

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process of developing professional development activities, focusing on employers in leadership positions. The NELC plans to sponsor "How Business Does School-to-Work" technical assistance forums, sharing best practices from job shadowing to more intensive apprenticeship initiatives.

Providing assistance in developing structured work-based learning opportunities. Many employers would like to be involved in school-to-work, but aren't sure how to structure work-based learning opportunities for students. In response, state and local school-to-work partnerships and other intermediary organizations offer assistance through training sessions, conferences, publications, and how-to guides. For example, the Portland and Linn-Benton Business Education Compacts recently developed the *Oregon Work-Based Learning Manual*, which provides employers a comprehensive guide to involvement in school-to-work systems.

Employer-led organizations are another important source of expertise on developing work-based learning experiences. Organizations such as the National Alliance of Business offer services to employers interested in developing or participating in school-to-work initiatives, such as workshops and on-site assistance to train employers on designing and implementing effective school-to-work programs. These activities can provide employers with detailed information on the practical steps necessary to be effective in a range of types of employer involvement. Topics often include setting standards, developing curricula frameworks, devising worksite learning plans, training mentors, assessing worksite skills, and issuing credentials.

Training worksite supervisors and mentors. While many professional development activities aimed at employers take a comprehensive approach to developing work-based learning experiences, others have focused specifically on the critical link between an employee and student. Training sessions for worksite supervisors and mentors often include information on the psychology of youth, learning styles, motivation, communication, valuing diversity, and conflict management as they relate to the work-based learning experience. Participants are introduced to a process for developing learning plans based on job tasks and the skills necessary for students to accomplish those tasks.

Worksite mentoring is an effective type of employer involvement and has been instrumental in developing relationships between employers and students. The School-to-Work Opportunities Act extends the idea of mentoring beyond the school and community settings, where it usually occurs, to include mentoring in the workplace. The widely recognized key to a good mentoring relationship is finding the "right" activity, and worksite mentorships are ideal because workplaces provide specific tasks and projects that mentors and students can work on together.

Labor unions have been an effective means for providing training for worksite supervisors and mentors. Other organizations such as the National Worksite Supervisor Development Institute (NWSDI) have been involved in training worksite supervisors and mentors. NWSDI was formed to help local and state school-to-work systems develop skilled and knowledgeable worksite supervisors. NWSDI, a joint venture of Maine's Center for Career Development, Siemens Corporation's Department of Technical Training, Jobs for the Future, and the National Alliance of Business, uses a "train-the-trainer" model to prepare workplace supervisors and mentors to be more effective participants in school-to-work systems.

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Creating peer learning and information networks. Employer networks are an excellent way for businesses to share school-to-work expertise, particularly within an industry. Peer learning and information networks within the business community can greatly expand the capacity of businesses to develop structured work-based learning experiences. For example, the National Health Employers School-to-Career Network was created by leaders within the health care industry, with the assistance of Jobs for the Future, to engage in outreach to other health care employers, inform new and existing initiatives about school-to-work, provide technical assistance, and help members learn from each other's experiences. The National Alliance of Business (NAB) is also developing a Mentor Bank of Business Practitioners, using a group of school-to-work experts from business to assist other businesses in developing work-based learning opportunities. Assistance is coordinated by NAB staff and is provided through site visits, phone inquiries, and presentations at industry-specific conferences.

Building school-to-work into an employer's professional development program. School-to-work can be a key piece of internal employee and management development systems aimed at increasing the productivity of employees. An uninterrupted transition from school-to-work to other employee training initiatives can promote the concept of lifelong learning and reinforce important concepts such as teamwork and critical thinking. Organizations such as the American Society for Training and Development can provide information on the relationship between school-to-work and other professional development activities within an organization.

Facilitating employer involvement in school-based activities. Finally, familiarity with education systems--their schedules, structures, and processes--can help employers develop a better understanding of how they can contribute to school-to-work systems. Employers can learn about schools through a variety of avenues, including school visits, participation in school-to-work advisory councils, contributing to integrated curriculum, and working with educators to develop skill standards. It is through these direct interactions between educators and employers that understanding and mutual respect can help develop learning partnerships among all of the stakeholders in school-to-work systems.

Effective Practice

The **BellSouth Corporation** has focused on mentor relationships as a key element of their work-based learning activities. Employees at BellSouth have developed the Worksite Mentor Communication Skills Workshop, which provides mentors with communication techniques to successfully train and coach students. Each business mentor attends an initial workshop in which they meet with the program coordinator. This initial session covers a program description, delineates roles and responsibilities, provides agreements and job descriptions, and addresses legal issues. Upon completion of the BellSouth workshop, mentors are prepared to act as role models, teachers, and coaches in the workplace. All mentors are expected to recognize student learning preferences, clarify expectations for the student, actively listen to student questions, provide feedback, and evaluate the mentor experience.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THIS TOPIC, CONSULT THE FOLLOWING RESOURCES:

BellSouth Corporation: Melanie Cadenhead, 1155 Peachtree Street, NE, Atlanta, GA 30309-3610. ★ (404) 249-0096.

Organizations

The AFL-CIO Human Resources Development Institute (HRDI) is the employment and training arm of the AFL-CIO, and works with labor, management, educational institutions, and community-based organizations to plan, design, and implement comprehensive work-based education and training programs. One of the foremost goals of HRDI is to help workplaces become more competitive by addressing the skill development needs of workers. 815 16th Street, NW, Room 405, Washington, DC 20006 ★ 202-638-3912.

American Society for Training and Development is a nonprofit professional association representing practitioners, managers, administrators, educators, and researchers in the field of human resource development. 1640 King Street, Box 1443, Alexandria, VA 22313-2043 ★ (703) 683-8100.

BellSouth Connections School-to-Work Initiative provides students with a range of work-based learning experiences, including job shadowing, internships, and mentoring. To facilitate the development of the mentor relationships, BellSouth has developed a Worksite Mentor Communication Skills Workshop and other professional development activities for school-to-work. 1155 Peachtree Street, NE, Atlanta, GA 30309-3120 ★ (404) 249-3120.

Jobs for the Future (JFF) has worked for ten years on issues of workforce preparation, economic development, and education reform and has focused on how these issues can be better integrated at the state and national levels so that all citizens are prepared for lives of work and learning. JFF has developed the National Health Employer School-to-Career Network, a group of 30 hospitals that support the expansion of school-to-work initiatives in the health industry. One Bowdoin Square, Boston, MA 02114 ★ (617) 742-5995.

National Alliance of Business (NAB) is an independent, business-led, nonprofit corporation established in 1968 to promote partnerships among business, labor, government, and education to develop and maintain a world-class American workforce. NAB is a leading force in bringing business and education together to improve the quality of the workforce. NAB's school-to-work services consist of technical assistance, product innovation, and on-site program development. 1201 New York Avenue, NW, Suite 700, Washington, DC 20005-3917 ★ (202) 289-2888.

National Employer Leadership Council (NELC) was created to provide a voice for the business community on school-to-work issues. The goal of the NELC is to mobilize employers around school-to-work initiatives in collaboration with other stakeholders. The NELC is a diverse, non-partisan coalition of Chief Executive Officers committed to investment in exemplary school-to-work initiatives within their own companies and throughout the nation. 1001 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 310, Washington, DC 20036 ★ (202) 822-8027.

National Worksite Supervisor Development Institute helps local and state school-to-work systems develop skilled and knowledgeable worksite supervisors. Center for Career Development, Southern Maine Technical College, Fort Road, South Portland, ME 04106 ★ (207) 767-5210.

Publications

American Society for Training and Development. *Info Line: School-to-Work Programs.* Alexandria, VA: American Society for Training and Development, 1995.

Freedman, Marc, and Rachel Baker. *Workplace Mentoring for Youth: Context, Issues, Strategies.* Washington, DC: Academy for Educational Development, 1995.

Hamilton, Stephen F., and Mary Agnes Hamilton. *Opening Career Paths For Youth: What Can Be Done? Who Can Do It?* Washington, DC: American Youth Policy Forum, 1994.

Jobs for the Future. *National Youth Apprenticeship Initiative Mentoring Manual.* Cambridge, MA: Jobs for the Future, 1992.

Jobs for the Future. *Redefining Corporate Responsibility in a Global Economy.* Boston, MA: Jobs for the Future, 1996.

National Alliance of Business. *Foundations for Life: A Blueprint for Better Business and Stronger Communities through School-to-Work.* Washington, DC: National Alliance of Business, 1995.

Oregon Department of Education. *Oregon Work-Based Learning Manual: An Employer's Guide.* Salem, OR: Oregon Department of Education, 1995.

For additional information, please contact:

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